

Citation for published version:

McInnes, K & Birdsey, N 2014, Understanding play: the perceptions of children, adolescents, parents and teachers. in *Play of individuals and societies*. pp. 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848883277_012

DOI:

[10.1163/9781848883277_012](https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848883277_012)

Publication date:

2014

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

University of Bath

Alternative formats

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:
openaccess@bath.ac.uk

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Understanding Play: The Perceptions of Children, Adolescents, Parents and Teachers

Karen McInnes and Nicola Birdsey

Abstract

Play as a concept is complex and often contested¹ despite the fact that it is claimed that we know play when we see it.² There have been considerable attempts by theorists to define play such as by: category,³ typology,⁴ criteria,⁵ and continuum.⁶ However, it has been stated that it is difficult to have a common conceptualisation or definition of play.⁷ Whilst there is a considerable body of literature on defining play by theorists, there is far less literature on understanding play from the perspectives of different professionals, parents, adolescents, and children. There is a growing research base of early years practitioners' understanding of play and how this relates to practice;⁸ however, there is a lack of research on the understanding of play from the perspective of other professionals. There is also limited research on parents' and adolescents' perspectives of play. There is, however, an emerging literature on children's perspectives of play but it is not yet known how their perspectives differ from the perceptions of adults. It is important to have a shared understanding of play for three reasons: so that there is a common language with which to talk about play,⁹ so that the same phenomenon is investigated by researchers,¹⁰ and so that there is clarity in relation to play practice. This chapter draws on a series of case studies which have employed a range of methodologies including: questionnaires, interviews and experiments to identify perceptions of play in relation to the aforementioned groups. As well as identifying similarities and differences in perceptions of play across the different groups, the implications for practice and future research are identified.

Key Words: Play, perceptions, children, parents, teachers, similarities, differences.

1. Introduction

Play is a universal activity shared by humans and animals and is considered to be central to man's existence and functioning, as surmised by the philosopher, Huizinga¹¹ who described man as 'homo ludens' or 'playing man'. Play is deemed to be particularly important for children and a natural part of growing up and is, therefore, viewed as a fundamental right of childhood; as expressed in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹² Although play is considered to be a natural part of childhood, many theories seek to explain why children play. Theorists have stated that children play to rid themselves of excess energy (e.g. Spencer, 1873)¹³ or to relax and build up further energy (e.g. Patrick,

1916). Other theorists have stated that play is a reflection, and working through, of man's past history (e.g. Hall, 1920), or it is an opportunity to prepare for life as an adult (e.g. Groos, 1898, 1901).¹⁴ Others consider that play has a cathartic function (e.g. Freud, 1959),¹⁵ a motivational function (e.g. Berlyne, 1960),¹⁶ or an intellectual function (e.g. Piaget, 1951).¹⁷ Whatever its function, play is considered to be beneficial to children as it promotes all aspects of development, including creativity, problem solving, emotional equilibrium and the development of independence.¹⁸

Attempts have been made to define play although these have been fraught with difficulty and play has been considered by some to be indefinable¹⁹. Play may be contrasted with work and this presents a dilemma in understanding play, which is thought to be distinct from work. However, others have argued that play *is* the child's work.²⁰ Once this dilemma is addressed, play is refined into types, although these vary depending on the perspective taken. Playworkers identified 16 types of play including: fantasy play, exploratory play and deep play,²¹ whereas early years practitioners differentiate between free play and structured play. Whatever type of play is proposed, this is rarely used in relation to play in adolescents or adults. Many psychologists suggest that the leisure and organised activities that occur as children get older should not be considered play at all²² and there is certainly limited literature relating to play in older age groups.

To date, the understanding of play reflected in the literature comes from adult perspectives of play. Theories and types of play have been determined by adults, primarily those researching and working in play. There is, unfortunately, little understanding of parents' or even adolescents' perspectives of play. In addition, most of the thinking about play is in relation to children yet little is known about their perspectives of play or how this compares to adults' perspectives. This chapter, therefore, uses multiple methodologies to identify similarities and differences in perceptions of play across children, adolescents, parents, and teachers.

2. Methods

The studies reviewed in this chapter have employed a variety of methods, including apperception procedures (AASP), questionnaires, and interviews in order to investigate children's, adolescents', parents', and teachers' perceptions of play. A brief justification of each method is outlined below.

The *Activity Apperception Story Procedure* (AASP) used in this study was developed by Howard.²³ This method requires children to look at photographs of familiar classroom activities and post them into letter boxes labelled 'play' and 'not play'. These pictures contain paired cues including but not limited to: teacher presence, social context, positive affect and nature of the activity. Once children have categorised the pictures, they are asked to verbally justify their decisions; this permits researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of children's perceptions of

play and confirms the cues children are using. Although the AASP is typically used with children^{24 25 26 27} the studies in this chapter have also applied this method to adults, namely parents and teachers, to establish consistency across samples.^{28 29} This method is considered to be developmentally appropriate as its simple approach places minimal cognitive demand upon children and is not dependent on any reading and writing abilities. The AASP also offers researchers a systematic and rigorous way of determining children's and adults' perceptions of play. However, it must be noted that the efficacy of this method is dependent upon the cues selected by the researcher; if all cues are utilised, the procedure can become a lengthy process.

Questionnaires were also employed to ascertain children's, parents', and teachers' perceptions of play. Questions were predominantly open-ended to encourage participants to express their personal views regarding play. Questionnaires were deemed an appropriate method as, unlike more flexible interview methods, participants answer the same questions in the same order thus promoting greater comparability and facilitating analysis of responses. This approach enabled researchers to identify both commonalities and differences in the perceptions of play across children, parents and teacher groups. The researchers in this study acknowledge that this method has limited flexibility; for example, participants must fit their responses into the researcher's pre-determined topics, pertinent issues may have been omitted, and there is limited scope for clarifying or following-up participants' responses. To address some of these issues, interviews were also employed to gain more in-depth and rich qualitative data.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with children, adolescents, parents, and teachers across all the studies. Although structured interviews would have permitted greater standardisation of questions and answers, greater neutrality of the researcher's role, and a reduction in inter-and intra-interviewer variability, the researchers in these studies needed to probe beyond participants' answers and engage in a fuller dialogue with them regarding their beliefs about play. The semi-structured method was therefore adopted as it allowed the interviewers greater voice than the structured alternative. The unstructured interview approach was also considered but was ruled out as the researchers identified comparability issues due to the lack of structure.³⁰

Table 1: Participant details

Participants	N	Age range (years)
Children	239	3-9
Adolescents	41	11-18
Parents	96	21-45
Teachers	139	21-65

TOTAL	534	
--------------	------------	--

3. Perceptions of Play from Children and Adolescents

A. Children

Previous research using the AASP has shown that children use environmental and emotional cues to differentiate between play and not play.³¹ The studies discussed in this chapter support the use of the cues of location - whether an activity occurs on the table or floor, ($p < 0.001$, $N=80$) and adult presence - whether an adult is present or not, ($p < 0.001$, $N=80$), however, social grouping was not significant ($p = 0.449$, $N=80$). The justification part of the AASP further supported this, for example, a child saying ‘it’s not playing when we have to do work at the table’. Additionally, comments from the AASP identified that type of activity was important to children, ‘they’re not playing ‘cos it’s writing’ and that difficulty also impacted their decision making ‘maths work is hard, it’s not play’.

Themes from the interview data supported the cues identified from the AASP. Location and teacher presence were also highlighted, supporting previous research.³² Play being fun and enjoyable was consistently noted: ‘play makes me happy’ or ‘playing is like where you’re having fun and that’. Having choice and control was also important for children: ‘playing is fun because you can choose what you want to play and who you want to play with’. The social nature of play was deemed important from the interview data unlike the AASP data: ‘playing is having fun with other children’. New aspects of children’s understanding of play were revealed by the interview data. Location was expanded to include the importance of the outside space with 65% of children ($N=57$) stating its importance. Play was also recognised as something important in its own right: ‘it’s not anything else it’s just play’ and the natural freedom inherent within play was clearly recognised: ‘play is when we can do what we want and not what grown ups tell us’. Play was seen to provide an opportunity for rest and relaxation ‘play is a time when your brain can have a rest’ and ‘play is a break from doing work and time to play’. As the previous quote demonstrates, and in contrast to much of the literature, children were clearly able to differentiate between play and work: ‘because when you’re working I don’t think you play, I think you work’. Furthermore, children did not think they were learning when they played: ‘that’s not learning ‘cos they’re playing’.

B. Adolescents

The interview data from the adolescents showed that for them one of the most important factors in identifying an activity as play was having choice and control: ‘play is something that you don’t have to do but want to do’. They also identified certain areas or places where play could occur: ‘if it was outside or somewhere or in a place like this play club...but not somewhere like a shop or anything’ and that play had a social element ‘play is with others, innit’. In addition, adolescents also identified certain activities that were recognised as play activities including

computer games, sports activities and outdoor activities. However, the overriding impression from the interview data was that play for adolescents was constrained. They reported constraints from society in relation to age and consequent expectations, stating that: ‘you can’t do that [play] you’ve got to grow up’ or ‘it’s different, that’s considered child’s work and that’s forbidden’.

C. Parents

The AASP results for parents were significant for location ($p < 0.05$, $N=15$), however, grouping as a cue was not significant ($p = 0.83$, $N=15$). Unlike the AASP results for children, adult presence as a cue was not significant as all activities were reading, writing and mathematics related and were, therefore, not perceived as play. Analysis of the justification data revealed that parents were adamant that they knew what children perceived play to be. However, while parents consistently reported that they knew what play is, there were clear differences in their justifications and definitions of play, thus suggesting that play meant different things to different parents.

Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed that, like children, parents recognised play as a fun and enjoyable activity not only for children but for parents too: ‘I think play is all about doing something enjoyable and fun’ and ‘I have a lot of fun playing with my child’. Surprisingly, parents did not elaborate on location in the way children did; instead, they identified choice as an important factor which had developmental benefits: ‘children can choose who they want to play with in school; that’s how they get their confidence to make friends’. Some parents acknowledged that children needed adequate time to play; describing play as ‘a natural activity of childhood’. Whilst it was encouraging that parents recognised the importance of play, the overwhelming consensus among parents was that play *had* to have a purpose, either personal, e.g. ‘they begin to learn who they are as a person, experimenting through play), or academic, as in ‘play helps them learn in a fun way’. However, some parents failed to see any academic benefits of play, expressing concerns such as: ‘I’ve never thought about play being beneficial for learning’ or ‘I can’t see how play is going to be beneficial in lots of areas, especially the important areas like learning maths and English’. Like children, parents clearly distinguished between learning and play. Parents who did not appreciate the relationship between play and learning did, nonetheless, report practical functions of play, including its purpose as a time-filler: ‘I think play is good but for spare time more than anything’ and as a means of energy release: ‘play is good because it helps children let off steam and release their energy in a good way and stops them from lashing out’.

D. Teachers

The AASP results for teachers were consistent with the parent data; location as a cue was significant ($p < 0.05$, $N=14$), while grouping as a cue was not significant ($p = .95$, $N=14$). Adult presence was also not significant ($p = 0.40$, $N=14$). Unlike parents’ justifications, teachers identified choice as a cue. Teachers suggested that

if children have an element of choice in an activity, they will enjoy it so it can be considered as play. Analysis of justification data revealed that teachers made assumptions that they knew how children would interpret a situation as play or not.

Themes from the teacher interview data supported the themes from the parent data. For example, teachers also recognised enjoyment as a factor: ‘play enables children to enjoy what they’re doing’. As expected, teachers expressed an appreciation that ‘children learn whilst playing’ because ‘play is free from failure which is why it works so well as a vehicle for learning’. Some teachers perceived playing and learning as interrelated constructs: ‘There should be no distinction between the two as learning is generated by play’. Teachers also articulated how play ‘helps children personally and academically’. The social aspects of play were frequently reported by teachers: ‘it (play) helps them to interact with others and follow rules... which helps them in everyday life’ and ‘play is important for children; it helps them to mix with other children and become more social’. Like parents, teachers uniformly agreed that play *had* to have a purpose, i.e. learning or energy release, for example, play helps children ‘let off steam and get rid of excess energy’. Teacher interview data also supported adolescents’ perceptions that play is considered an activity for younger children. For example, some teachers defined play according to age, stating: ‘only younger children play’. Teachers were the only sample to differentiate between free play, where children can exercise choice, and structured play, where teachers set up activities which are traditionally seen as learning. Free choice was typically associated with the absence of an adult presence while teachers iterated the importance of adult presence during structured play.

4. Discussion

As Garvey³³ stated, it is difficult to have a common conceptualisation of play which is shared by children, adolescents and adults. Using a variety of common methods, this study has identified both similarities and differences in the perceptions of play among children, adolescents, parents and teachers, previously identified as an under-researched area. Whilst using interviews or questionnaires across the different groups may constitute the same type of method, the different questions employed can make comparisons difficult. Using multiple methods has enabled triangulation of the data and given greater confidence in the findings.

It is contested that we know play when we see it³⁴ and the interview data indicates that adults think they know what children think about play. However, using the AASP across the same groups has revealed that adults and children view play differently. Children used the cues of location and adult presence to differentiate between play and not play activities whilst adults only used the cue of location. This has implications for adult practitioners who wish to utilise play when they interact with children as their very presence undermines the playful nature of the activity, although very playful adults may moderate this.³⁵

Other differences in perceptions of play were apparent from the interview data. Children had a clear appreciation of play and considered it to be important for its own sake. They also tended not to differentiate between types of play - they just played. However, in line with some theories of play, both parents and teachers felt that play must have a purpose. In accordance with the excess energy theory of play, adults thought that play enabled children to release energy. They also thought that play kept them occupied. Parents were unsure about play and its relationship with learning; whilst they valued play for helping children's social and emotional development they devalued it in their belief that it did not help children learn more academic subjects. Teachers, however, believed that play was beneficial for learning. This mismatch between views of play in relation to learning has implications for teachers implementing a play-based curriculum in the classroom; as teachers have to address parents' concerns about children playing and learning, and be aware of children's views regarding play and learning.

Disparities in children's and parents' views about playing and learning are further compounded by adults' differentiation between types of play. Teachers differentiated between free and structured play, whereby free play facilitates choice with no adult presence while structured play generally includes teacher presence during playful yet 'academic' activities. Teachers' preference for structured play sends clear messages to parents and children that some free play activities have a weaker relationship with learning as adult presence is not important. This ultimately results in children using the cue of adult presence to differentiate between play and not activities. However, it does enable children to differentiate between play and not play activities, which is something that is argued in the literature that children do not do.

Adolescents shared both similarities and differences with all groups. All groups saw choice as an important aspect of play used as a cue to define play³⁶. Play was perceived as a social activity by all groups, although children were aware that it did not have to be, and all groups saw play as a fun and enjoyable activity. A similarity between teachers and adolescents was both groups' perception of age in relation to play. Teachers often commented that only younger children played and it is only embedded within the curriculum for younger children. Adolescents also perceived that only younger children played, however, for them, this was a limiting factor in their ability to play, hence the assertion in the literature that play does not occur in older age groups³⁷, evidenced in the lack of play research among this age group.

In conclusion, from these studies it would appear that play is perceived differently by different groups. Whilst there are similarities, the differences have the potential to impact practice. To date, most discussions about play and what is understood about play have derived from adults' perspectives. It is now time to look at play from the viewpoint of children and adolescents. Understanding play from the perspectives of these groups has the potential to provide a more complex and more complete understanding of play and has the potential to have an impact

on practice. By understanding children's and adolescents' views of play, adults can provide more play opportunities, making activities more playful and enabling players to be more playful.

Notes

¹ Josie Gleave and Issy Cole-Hamilton, *A World Without Play: A Literature Review* (London: Play England, 2012).

² Peter K. Smith and Ralph Vollstedt, 'On Defining Play: An Empirical Study of the Relationship Between Play and Various Play Criteria', *Child Development* 56 (1985): 1042-1055.

³ Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1951).

⁴ Bob Hughes, *Play Types: Speculations and Possibilities* (London: Centre for Playwork Education and Training, 2006).

⁵ Keith H. Rubin, Gina G. Fein and Brian Vandenberg, 'Play' in *Handbook of Child Psychology. 4th Edition. Vol. IV. Socialisation, Personality and Social Development*, ed. Peter H. Mussen (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983): 643-681.

⁶ Anthony D. Pellegrini, *Applied Child Study* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1991).

⁷ Catherine Garvey, *Play* (London: Fontana Press, 1991).

⁸ Karen McInnes, et al., 'Differences in Practitioners' Understanding of Play and How this Influences Pedagogy and Children's Perceptions of Play', *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development* 31 (2011): 121-133.

⁹ Gleave and Cole-Hamilton, 'World Without Play'.

¹⁰ Lyann Thomas, Justine Howard and Gareth Miles, 'The Effectiveness of Playful Practice for Learning in the Early Years, *Psychology of Education Review* 30 (2006): 52-58.

¹¹ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

¹² 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' last modified 2009, Viewed 14 June 2010, www.unicef.org/uk/tz/rights.convention.asp

¹³ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Appleton, 1873).

¹⁴ Karl Groos, *The Play of Man* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1901).

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Norton, 1959).

¹⁶ Daniel E. Berlyne, *Conflict, Arousal and Curiosity* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1960).

¹⁷ Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*, (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1951).

-
- ¹⁸ Fraser Brown, *Play Theories and the Value of Play*, Highlight 223 (London: NCB, 2006).
- ¹⁹ Garvey, 'Play', 2.
- ²⁰ Susan Isaacs, *The Nursery Years* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1929).
- ²¹ Hughes, 'Play Types', 2.
- ²² Fergus P. Hughes, *Children, Play and Development* (London: Sage Publications, 2010).
- ²³ Justine Howard, 'Eliciting Young Children's Perceptions of Play, Work and Learning using the Activity Apperception Story Procedure', *Early Child Development and Care* 172 (2002): 489-502.
- ²⁴ Justine Howard, Vikki Jenvey and Carly Hill, 'Children's Categorisation of Play and Learning based on Social Context', *Early Child Development and Care* 176 (2006): 379-393.
- ²⁵ Justine Howard, 'Making the Most of Play in the Early Years', in *Play and Learning in the Early Years*, Eds. Pat Broadhead, Justine Howard and Elizabeth Wood (London: Sage Publications, 2010), 145-160.
- ²⁶ Karen McInnes, 'The Role of Playful Practice for Learning in the Early Years' (PhD diss, University of Glamorgan, 2010).
- ²⁷ Karen McInnes, et al., 'Differences in adult-child interactions during playful and formal practice conditions: An initial investigation' *Psychology of Education Review* 34 (2010): 14-20.
- ²⁸ Danielle Pennington, 'Exploring Children's and Teachers' Perceptions of Play and Learning' (BSc diss, University of Glamorgan, 2012).
- ²⁹ Stephanie Owen-Leeds, 'Defining Play: Exploring Similarities and Differences in the Perceptions of Play between Adults and Children' (BSc diss, University of Glamorgan, 2013).
- ³⁰ Abraham N. Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement* (London: Pinter, 1992).
- ³¹ Justine Howard and Karen McInnes, 'Thinking Through the Challenge of a Play-based Curriculum' in *Thinking about Play. Developing a Reflective Approach*, ed. Janet Moyles (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010), 30-44.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Garvey, 'Play', 2.
- ³⁴ Smith and Vollstedt, 'On Defining Play', 2.
- ³⁵ McInnes, 'Role of Playful Practice'.
- ³⁶ Howard and McInnes, 'Thinking Through', 4.
- ³⁷ Hughes, *Children*, 2.

Bibliography

Berlyne, Daniel, E. *Conflict, Arousal and Curiosity*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1960.

Brown, Fraser. *Play Theories and the Value of Play, Highlight 223*. London: NCB, 2006.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York: Norton, 1959. Garvey, Catherine. *Play*. London: Fontana Press, 1991.

Gleave, Josie, and Issy Cole-Hamilton. *A World Without Play: A Literature Review*. London: Play England, 2012.

Groos, Karl. *The Play of Man*. London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1901.

Hall, Granville Stanley. *Adolescence*. New York: Appleton, 1908.

Howard, Justine. 'Eliciting Young Children's Perceptions of Play, Work and Learning using the Activity Apperception Story Procedure', *Early Child Development and Care* 172 (2002): 489-502.

Howard, Justine, Vikki Jenvey, and Carly Hill. 'Children's Categorisation of Play and Learning based on Social Context', *Early Child Development and Care* 176 (2006): 379-393.

Howard, Justine. 'Making the Most of Play in the Early Years', in *Play and Learning in the Early Years*, edited by Pat Broadhead, Justine Howard, and Elizabeth Wood, 145-160. London: Sage Publications, 2010.

Howard, Justine, and Karen McInnes. 'Thinking Through the Challenge of a Play-based Curriculum'. In *Thinking about Play. Developing a Reflective Approach*, edited by Janet Moyles, 30-44. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010.

Hughes, Bob. *Play Types: Speculations and Possibilities*, London: Centre for Playwork Education and Training, 2006.

Hughes, Fergus P. *Children, Play and Development*, London: Sage Publications, 2010.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

Isaacs, Susan. *The Nursery Years*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1929.

McInnes, Karen. 'The Role of Playful Practice for Learning in the Early Years'. PhD diss., University of Glamorgan, 2010.

McInnes, Karen, Justine, Howard, Gareth E. Miles, and Kevin Crowley. 'Differences in Practitioners' Understanding of Play and How this Influences Pedagogy and Children's Perceptions of Play', *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development* 31 (2011): 121-133.

McInnes, Karen, Justine Howard, Gareth E. Miles, and Kevin Crowley. 'Differences in adult-child interactions during playful and formal practice conditions: An initial investigation' *Psychology of Education Review* 34 (2010): 14-20.

Oppenheim, Abraham N. *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*. London: Pinter, 1992.

Owen-Leeds, Stephanie. 'Defining Play: Exploring Similarities and Differences in the Perceptions of Play between Adults and Children'. BSc diss., University of Glamorgan, 2013.

Patrick, George, T. W. *The Psychology of Relaxation*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916.

Pellegrini, Anthony, D. *Applied Child Study*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1991.

Pennington, Danielle. 'Exploring Children's and Teachers' Perceptions of Play and Learning'. BSc diss., University of Glamorgan, 2012.

Piaget, Jean. *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*. London: William Heinmann Ltd, 1951.

Rubin, Keith, H, Greta G. Fein., and Brian Vandenberg. 'Play'. In *Handbook of Child Psychology. 4th Edition. Vol. IV. Socialisation, Personaltiy and Social*

Development, edited by Peter H. Mussen, 643-681. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983.

Smith, Peter, K, and Ralph Vollstedt. 'On Defining Play: An Empirical Study of the Relationship Between Play and Various Play Criteria'. *Child Development* 56 (1985): 1042-1055.

Spencer, Herbert. *The Principles of Psychology*. New York: Appleton, 1873).

Thomas, Lyann, Justine Howard, and Gareth Miles. 'The Effectiveness of Playful Practice for Learning in the Early Years. *Psychology of Education Review* 30 (2006): 52-58.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' last modified 2009. Viewed on 14 June 2010. <www.unicef.org/uk/tz/rights.convention.asp

Karen McInnes is a Senior Lecturer in Play and Human Development at the University of South Wales. She teaches undergraduate Psychology and Early Years Development and Education programmes and postgraduate Play Therapy and Therapeutic Play programmes.

Nicola Birdsey is a Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology at the University of South Wales. She also teaches undergraduate Psychology and Early Years Development and postgraduate Play Therapy and Therapeutic Play programmes.